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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of a secondary alternative school for at-risk students was studied with respect to the development and implementation of certain components that are generally thought to be critical to the success of at-risk education. The Hamilton Optional Program for Education (HOPE) school of Hamilton (Ohio) was the study site. Twenty percent of the more than 10,000 Hamilton students are considered economically disadvantaged. The HOPE school enrolls nearly 100 students in a program that includes work experience. HOPE students work individually on "packets," collections of reading assignments, worksheets, and tests required for each unit of credit. An evaluation based on the Discrepancy Evaluation Model of Malcolm Provus used a survey completed by 72 HOPE students and 115 non-HOPE at-risk students for comparison as part of its methodology. The study found that the HOPE school, as a whole, is meeting the needs of its at-risk students, if those needs are defined narrowly, that is, if their needs are determined to be, and are limited to, achieving a high school diploma and securing and maintaining some type of employment. The HOPE program has not been successful in building student-support networks in the community, in preparing its students for any employment other than that on the periphery, or in improving its students' sense of citizenship or commitment to the community or the society at large. Suggestions are made for program improvement. Six tables present study data. Appendix A contains interview questions, and Appendix B is a table of client responses. (Contains 136 references.) (SLD)

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE HOPE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL IN IMPLEMENTING CERTAIN SELECTED CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF AT-RISK EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Intensifying Concern

The education of "at-risk" youth has come to be perceived as one of the major challenges of our time. Lincoln and Smith (1988) write, "A crisis exists in the back rows of America's public school classrooms . . . its threat is present, grave, and sure to become more costly to meet the longer we delay it. The crisis is the undereducation of a body of students [that] has come to be called youth 'at risk'." In spite of monumental expenditures of time and money and Herculean efforts, there is little discernible evidence that the education system is making progress in addressing this "crisis."

At-risk youth are also the students most likely to drop out of school without a high school diploma. Gregory and Smith (1982) claim that "the dropout rate threatens to become a national scandal" (p. 83). Rodriguez (1990) warns that "our nation is at risk of starting the twenty-first century with one of four students failing to complete the essentials of learning" (p. 326).

At-risk youth and school dropouts have been the subject of increasing concern over the past two decades. One cannot pick up an educational journal, read a newspaper, or listen to local, state, or federal officials without being confronted with the at-risk/dropout situation (Apple, in Weis, p. 205). Conrath (1986) suggests that "at risk youth have been discovered . . . sort of like Columbus discovered America" (p. 3). Legislators, policymakers, and researchers have intensified the amount of time and resources devoted to measuring the extent of the dropout problem, examining its causes, and designing programs for prevention and recovery. West (1991) writes that "dropout prevention programs and at-risk students have been identified, defined, and researched by every

education association and organization in the U.S. in the last decade" (p. 1). DeBlois (1989) claims that "more research has been done on [at-risk youth and dropouts] in the last two years than in the previous twenty" (p. 6). President Bush and the nation's governors focused on high school completion as a primary educational concern; raising the graduation rate to at least 90% by the year 2000 was proclaimed by them to be one of the six "national education goals." The U.S. Department of Education has targeted programs for at-risk students as a top priority (U.S. Department of Education, 1987). In 1991, Barbara Presseisen wrote, "In short, at-risk students represent the threat of democratic society's failure itself, the fear that we are creating an ineradicable, untrained underclass, . . . plagued by a self-perpetuating pathology of joblessness, welfare dependency, and crime" (Research for Better Schools, 1991, p. 10). Clearly, the at-risk/dropout problem has emerged as a major national concern.

Growing At-Risk/Dropout Numbers

The numbers are staggering. The Committee for Economic Development (1987, 1991) suggests that 30% of the nations children are currently at risk and that the number will balloon to 50% if serious steps are not taken to reverse the trend. In their national study of students at-risk, Frymier and Gansneder (1989) found that "between 25% and 35% of the students in this study are seriously at-risk" (p. 144). Green and Baker (1986) state that "at-risk youth may make up as high as one-third of all high school students" (p. 7). Reported dropout rates vary depending upon who is collecting the data, the purpose of the data collection effort, and the collection and calculation methods used. West (1991), however, states that dropout rate estimates "range from 15 to 50 percent" (p. 10).

At-Risk Definitions

Who are these "at-risk" youth? Frymier and Gansneder (1989) define at-risk children as "likely to fail - either in school or in life" (p. 142). McCann and Austin (1988) observe that at-risk students are "students who, for whatever reason, are at-risk of not achieving the goals of education, at-risk of not acquiring the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to become productive members of American society" (p. 1). Some definitions are more specific. In a budget request to the governor, the Kansas State Education Department said at-risk students were "dropouts and pupils who have an excessive rate of unexcused absences, one parent, have been adjudicated delinquent, are two or more credits behind their age group in the number of graduation credits attained, have been retained one or more grades, or have failed to meet the standards on one or more of the Kansas Minimum Competency Tests" (Education Week, September 21, 1988). Wells (1990) claims that common predictors vary from group to group in intensity and frequency of occurrence, but generally can be used to identify students at risk of dropping out of school. Her At Risk Student Profile is an attempt to give an overview of student characteristics and experiences that often result in a decision to leave school.

-Low teacher expectations	-Minority status
-Problems with English	-Number of school moves
-Culture conflict with school	-Ineffective parenting
-Low parent education	-Inadequate counseling
-Parent job unskilled	-Poor facilities
-Illness & disability	-Negative school climate
-Loose school organization	-Low parent expectation
-Friends dropped out	-Discrimination
-Non-involvement in school	-Involvement with police

-Work
-Poor school attitude
-Stressful home life
-Low motivation
-External locus of control
-Substance abuse
-Non-academic program
-Neighborhood school loss
-Criminal activity
-High graduation requirements
-Low socio-economic status
-Attendance problems
-Discipline problems
-Pregnancy
-Poor peer relations
-Low ability
-Poor grades
-Low standardized test

(Wells, 1990)

Reasons for Growing Concerns

There are a number of reasons why the concern over dropout rates and at-risk students has intensified over the last two decades. The pool of educationally disadvantaged students, the population most likely to drop out of school, is projected to expand steadily into the foreseeable future. Student populations characterized by the five key indicators of low educational achievement (minority racial/ethnic group identity, poverty household, single parent family, poorly educated mother, and non-English language background) are experiencing significant growth. Birthrates of Blacks and Hispanics, groups with traditionally high dropout rates, will grow by 38.6% and 14.6% respectively from 1990 to the year 2000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988; Pallas, Natriello, & McGill, 1986). Societal phenomena which effect the stability of students such as divorce, the number of children growing up in broken homes, out-of-wedlock births, drug use, murder, rape, aggravated assault, incest, and child abuse are all increasing at an alarming rate. Harold Hodgkinson (1985), a noted demographic authority, warns, "it is clear that what is coming toward the educational system is a group of children who will be poorer, more

ethnically and linguistically diverse, and who will have more handicaps that will effect their learning" (p.7).

The conditions of the rapidly evolving American economy do not bode well for dropouts. Stable, good-paying jobs which do not require advanced training are disappearing. Since 1973, the United States has suffered a net loss of 1.7 million manufacturing jobs to the retail and service areas, but the wages for these jobs are only half the level of the typical manufacturing job. The highly competitive and increasingly technological American economy offers prosperity to those with advanced skills while the trend for those with less education is to scramble for unsteady, part-time, low-paying jobs (The Forgotten Half, January, 1988).

Dropouts and their future families are in deep economic trouble and the best available projections indicate that they are destined to stay there indefinitely. While dropouts, as a whole, earned 42% less in 1986 than their peers in 1973, Black dropouts earned 60% less. The median real family income for families of dropouts under 30 years of age dropped 46% from 1973 to 1990. Approximately 65% of the children of dropouts live in poverty. One third of all families headed by a person 24 years old or less is in poverty. In the last 13 years, the poverty rate of such white families rose from 10% to 24% while the rate for comparable black families rose from 44% to 62%. Two different studies found that the median income of all young families declined by 26.3% and 28.7% respectively during the same period (Sum, Fogg, & Taggert 1988; Apgar & Brown, 1988). The extent of this "New Depression" being experienced by young Americans becomes evident when this figure is compared with the 27% drop in income during the Great Depression of the early 1930s. The bottom fifth of young families have seen their share of the total economic pie decline from

6.1% to 3.9%. The number and percentage of young families headed by a single parent, especially never-married females, has skyrocketed. The poverty rate of single, young, limited-education mothers is over 90 percent. Most "sub-families," young people with children who are still living with parents, would be in poverty if they were on their own. Also, the evidence suggests that the situation is cyclical; lower basic academic skills and attainment levels correlate strongly with early parenthood, out-of-wedlock births, dependence on public assistance, unemployment, crime, and poverty (W.T. Grant Foundation, November 1988; Children's Defense Fund, 1992).

Americans seem to have grasped the staggering costs associated with dropping out of school. The estimated annual cost to the nation in lost personal income is 229 billion while lost tax revenue is calculated at approximately 69 billion (Catterall, 1987). Levin (1972) has suggested that these figures be adjusted downward by 25% because dropouts probably have lower ability than their graduate counterparts and because the added graduates would bring down the market wage for all graduates.) A part of the annual 33 billion in resources devoted to securing high school diplomas can be written off as wasted since that goal is not achieved for the group of students that drops out each year. Another 6 billion is required annually for welfare, crime-related services, unemployment compensation, and health services. Feichner (1989) claims that a 1% increase in unemployment increases the federal outlay by 64%) Additional losses in self-esteem, security, life satisfaction, health, and community participation precipitated by dropout status certainly contribute to the erosion of society. Finally, the children of the less-educated tend to follow in the educational footsteps of their parents (Catterall, 1987).

Many have recently come to believe that stiffening global economic competition has made imperative the maximization of the economic potential of all citizens. Dropouts are increasingly perceived as a drag on the economic competitiveness of the nation. Business leaders are worried about the rising high school dropout rates and the identification of high percentages of marginal students who are either at risk of dropping out or who will graduate with substandard skills. Business leaders agonize that, if current trends continue, they will soon be relying on these marginally prepared young people to form the ranks of their new employees (Education Commission of the States Business Advisory Commission, 1985). Veale (1990) reports that businesses now claim to be spending billions to shore up the basic reading, writing and math skills of unqualified workers (p. 2).

Middle and upper class Americans are beginning to sense that their futures and the futures of their children are inextricably intertwined with the fortunes of the less-advantaged of the nation. In 1950, seventeen workers paid the benefits of each retiree. By 1993, only three workers will provide the funds for each retiree, and one of these three workers will be a minority (Hodgkinson, 1985). The welfare and survival of a growing elderly population could depend on an increasingly poor and under-educated work force.

The final factor attracting attention to the dropout rate is the educational reform movement. Levin (1972) states,

> The unique needs of the educationally disadvantaged cannot be fully or effectively addressed by reforms of a general nature, such as increasing course requirements...in the absence of specific

> remedial programs for the disadvantaged, the general reforms may overwhelm the abilities of ever larger numbers of them to meet the requirements for high school completion. (p. 13)

Indeed, Hodgkinson (1985) claims that the national high school graduation rate declined from 76% to 73% over the course of the 1980s due, in part, to the "excellence" movement. Many concerned individuals inside and outside of education believe that higher standards will force substantial numbers of students out of school, with dire consequences for both the students and society (Hamilton, 1986; McDill, Natriello, & Pallas, 1986).

Program Components

At-risk youth, walking the tightrope over the economic and social abyss that is dropout status, are in urgent need of intensive interventions and programs to help them stay in school. The literature contains myriad program recommendations. In fact, most authors writing on the topic of dropouts and most agencies dealing with at-risk students have formalized a list of program recommendations. Such recommendations usually exist in the form of suggested program components.

Cuban (1989) proposes four program features which he claims "have appeared in the literature and coincide with practitioner wisdom."

(1) Programs should be small so as to foster enduring relationships and personalized instruction
(2) The staff should be a spirited professional cadre committed to at-risk students
(3) The program should be flexible as to schedule, progress, and approach
(4) The school should emulate a community or extended family so as to build a sense of belonging (p. 30)

In an effort to determine the most successful tactics within a comprehensive strategy, the National Dropout Prevention Center (1990) conducted an analysis of current research and practices in more than 350 dropout prevention programs. The result was a synthesis of approaches that have had the most positive impact on the dropout rate in communities across the nation. These program components are parental involvement, concentrated reading and writing programs, individualized instruction, instructional technology, mentoring and tutoring, workforce readiness, career counseling, flexible scheduling and alternative programs, staff development, school-based management, and community/business collaboration.

Alternative Schools

Many authorities on at-risk education suggest that alternative schools may be the best, and possibly the only, solution to the dropout problem. The United States has attempted to create a monolithic public school system that will work for everyone. Smith (1974) states that "for many years, American public education has been attempting to do the impossible--to teach every child in the same way at the same time" (p. 74). The traditional public school, by definition, provides something for everyone through a smorgasbord approach. The needs, interests, organization, and accountability for public schools have evolved through the process of "averaging" the requests of the masses. The term "average" is fundamental to the design of the traditional public school (Fantini, 1976).

Wehlage and Rutter (1987) believe that alternative schools can provide the necessary "end run" around the institutional obstacles to teaching at-

risk youth (p. 87). According to Hahn (1987), "alternative schools are often the best available option for potential and actual dropouts" (p. 262). The Education Commission of the States (1986) argues that "society spends up to ten times as much on advantaged kids as it does on the disadvantaged. Why not partially equalize this by giving the dropouts an opportunity to be educated in an alternative setting" (p. 7). Natriello, McDill, and Pallas (1990) argue "for many disadvantaged students, the typical high school presents an incompatible environment. Physical separation tends to highlight the distinctive features of the dropout prevention program and students may be more disposed toward an educational setting that does not remind them of their regular school, a site of failure and frustration" (pp. 117, 180). Gregory and Smith (1987) cite a number of educational reports that, directly or indirectly, recommend alternative high schools (p. 7). Duke (1990) identifies another collection of reports that calls for alternative schools for students not experiencing success in the regular high school, students at risk of dropping out, and students who have already left school (pp. 62, 63).

Smith (1974) claims that the term "public alternative school" means "any school that provides alternative learning experiences to those provided by conventional schools and that is available by choice to every family in the community at no extra cost" (pp. 14-15). According to the U.S. Department of Justice (1980), an alternative education program "embraces subject matter and/or teaching methodology that is not generally offered to students of the same age or grade level. The term includes the use of program methods and materials that facilitate student success and are relevant to students' needs and interests" (p. 11). Unlike conventional public schools, alternative schools do not attempt to be all

things to all people. In consumer terms, they are "specialty stores" rather than "department stores" (Young, 1990). Morley (1991) believes that alternative education is more a "perspective" than a program or procedure. It is based on the belief that there are many ways to become educated, as well as many types of environments and structures within which this may occur.

For a variety of reasons, alternative schools sprouted, endured, and flourished within the public school systems in the 1970s; whereas 200 public alternatives were operating in the U.S. in 1973, approximately 10,000 public alternative schools were providing options to some 3 million children by 1981 (National Alternative Schools Program, 1973; Raywid, 1981).

The rationale for and clientele of public alternative education have shifted in the last decade. The progressive and open orientation of the 1970s has recently given way to a more conservative and remedial one. Alternative schools have traditionally attracted the middle and upper classes, but optional programs have increasingly focused on the "dis" populations, e.g., the disaffected, the disadvantaged, the disruptive, the under-achieving, the pregnant, and the dropout-prone (Young, 1990). In a 1982 survey, 73% of administrators said alternative schools served "all kinds" of students and 20% answered "low achievers," "disruptive," and "turned off" students. In a similar survey conducted in 1988, 38% of administrators responded that alternatives served "all kinds" of students while 53% selected "low-achievers," "disruptive," and "turned off" (Hunter, 1985; Young, 1990). Currently, most medium to large size school districts either have an alternative school in operation or are at least considering the option as a means of meeting the needs of at-risk students.

Elements of successful alternative schools closely match program recommendations for at-risk education. Such program components include small size, a "whole student" approach, a supportive environment, a sense of community, experiential learning, integrated curriculum, a degree of freedom from standard district operating procedure, staff and student choice, high levels of teacher autonomy, cooperative learning, positive student/teacher relations, and a caring and concerned staff (Foley, 1982; Foley, 1984; Morley, 1991; Wehlage, 1983; Young, 1990). Incorporating appropriate components, however, certainly does not guarantee program effectiveness. Peck (1989) states that "it seems to matter less what is done than who does it and how" (p. 19). Cuban (1989) explains that

> knowing how to put together the right combination of people, things, and ideas to create a productive setting that supports at-risk students . . . remains just out of our reach. It is the difference between having all of the parts of the car lying around and knowing exactly how to put them together to make the car run. We know the necessary parts . . . but we lack the know-how to put them together in just the right order (p. 30).

Little Research Available

In spite of the attention the at-risk/dropout problem has commanded over the last two decades and the fact that at-risk alternative schools are increasing exponentially across the country, there is very little published research available on at-risk programs. Hamilton (1986), reviewing the ERIC index, found a "surprisingly small number of reports and only a few with both program descriptions and data indicating program effectiveness" (p. 410). Green and Baker (1986), reviewing studies and programs in the Northwest Region, found that most of what is considered "effective" is a

matter of expert testimony as opposed to carefully designed research. Mann (1986) points out that, although there is an astonishing array of things being done that are considered helpful to dropout prevention, little research has been completed to evaluate specific interventions in terms of effect. He describes what he terms the "blizzard" of approaches, the lack of agreement on outcome measures, and the consequent dirth of evidence on what works. Jay Smink, director of the National Dropout Prevention Center, states that "when . . . decisions are made regarding dropout prevention programs, these decisions are frequently based on emotions, on the influences of special interest groups, or in reaction to the pressures of powerful advocates of other existing projects" (West, 1991, p. 233).

The same situation exists with respect to research on alternative schools. Morley (1991) writes that "the evaluation of alternatives is exceedingly difficult to conduct and interpret when the diversity of students served and their needs vary so greatly" (p. 27). Smith (1991) also agonized over the paucity of sound research on alternatives.

> When educators in programs for at-risk students are asked to evaluate their work, they often turn to anecdotal information. Although such information is valuable, it tends not to possess the same authority . . . as figures that demonstrate explicit changes in the school-related behavior of potential dropouts. The continued existence of programs marginal to mainstream classrooms is often dependent on their ability to show that they are achieving outcomes with at-risk students that conventional schools are unable to demonstrate. The collection of such information . . . should be a priority. Not only can these data play an important role in convincing skeptics of the value of alternative educational settings, they can help teachers and administrators involved in dropout prevention programs to evaluate their own work as it is affecting

> groups of students rather than the isolated individuals who are so often mentioned when they are asked about the worth of their schools (West, 1991, p.55).

It is critical to the success of at-risk/dropout programs, schools, and strategies that information on "effectiveness" be gathered and disseminated. Planners need specific information about distinct programs. This is especially true of strategies that might appear iconoclastic and questionable to those unfamiliar with working with at-risk students. Armed with such information, responsible individuals and agencies can make informed decisions on program funding, planning, and implementation. In response to the need for specific program information, this study evaluated one at-risk/dropout-prevention program. This study evaluated the effectiveness of a secondary, at-risk, alternative school with respect to the development and implementation of certain components that authorities generally agree are critical to the success of at-risk education.

The School Site

The Hamilton Optional Program for Education (HOPE school) served as the site for this study. The HOPE school is situated in the city of Hamilton in Butler County, Ohio. Hamilton is a city of 65,000 with an unemployment rate of 6.9% and a youth unemployment rate of 22.3%. Both of these figures are the highest in Butler County. Hamilton has been designated a "distressed area" by the Ohio Department of Development. Approximately 44% of the adults over 25 years of age lack a high school diploma.

The Hamilton City Schools enrolled 10,458 students for the 1991-1992 school year. Of these students, 20% were identified as "economically disadvantaged," 20% came from families eligible for Aid to Families of

Dependent Children, and 30% qualified for the federal free and reduced lunch program. The district has a 36% dropout rate. (Hamilton City Schools, 1991)

HOPE is an alternative secondary school serving at-risk students of the Hamilton City Schools. Hope has a staff of 5 teachers and a capacity of 100 students. Funding is made available through the federal Job Training Partnership Act and the Ohio Occupational Work Experience program. Students must be overage for their grade, behind in credits, and 16 years of age to be eligible to attend HOPE. Enrollment is on a voluntary basis. The 1991-1992 school year was the first year of operation for HOPE school.

HOPE students work independently on "packets," collections of reading assignments, worksheets, and tests required for each unit of credit. The attempts of the HOPE staff and resource personnel to meet the vast range of individual needs of HOPE students creates a bustle of activity which is aggravated by a steady stream of visitors, parents, enrollees, supervisors, tutors, counselors, detectives, and parole officers. HOPE students have a casual, easy relationship with staff members. HOPE students do not appear to have reservations about disclosing any information concerning their private, neighborhood, or community lives; they do not seem to experience any anxiety about reprisals or repercussions that might result from such disclosures.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation design utilized for this study is based on Malcolm Provus's Discrepancy Evaluation Model (DEM). The Discrepancy Evaluation Model defines "evaluation" as the comparison of what is, a performance (P), to an expectation of what should be, a standard (S). If a difference is

found to exist between the standard and the performance, the difference is known as a discrepancy (D). Discrepancies may be positive, where performance exceeds the standard, or negative, where performance is less than the standard. Negative discrepancies may be resolved in three ways: an unrealistic standard may be reformulated or redesigned; management may exert greater control over the performance; or the program may be terminated (Yavorsky, 1976). That is, program evaluation is the process of (1) defining program standards; (2) determining whether a discrepancy exists between some aspect of program performance and the standard governing that aspect of the program; and (3) using discrepancy information either to change performance or to change program standards (Provus, 1971, p. 183).

A "Program Design" for HOPE school was constructed. No mission statement, program goals, or performance criteria for HOPE school were committed to writing. Consequently, information for the Program Design emerged primarily from discussions between the evaluator, program staff, and other knowledgeable district and community personnel. The Program Design, then, served as the Standard (S) for this evaluation.

Wehlage and Rutter (in Green & Baker, 1986) believe that program success can and should be evaluated on the basis of visible criteria such as a reduced dropout rate, less frequent disruptive behavior, and improved competencies in basic skills as well as other less tangible variables including improved self-esteem, increased perception of opportunities, greater degree of social bonding, and more participation in the shared values of society (p. 20).

After extensive discussions between the evaluator and program staff in which the aforementioned suggestions of Wehlage and Rutter received

considerable consideration, five areas of "concern" were identified. The areas of concern include academic performance, support for students, school climate, student employability, and student connectedness to the community and society.

Five evaluation questions were identified so as to focus inquiry with respect to the evaluation concerns.

1. Is there empirical evidence that HOPE students are making academic progress?

2. Is the support provided to HOPE students of the appropriate kind and of adequate intensity so as to accomplish program goals?

3. Do students sense a caring and concerned environment at HOPE school? Do students at HOPE believe that the school staff is genuinely interested in and concerned about their success and well-being?

4. Are HOPE students able to voice sufficient knowledge of employment processes and indicate possession of the attitudes and skills necessary to secure and maintain an employment position?

5. Do HOPE students feel a connectedness to the community and to the society which influences them to make decisions that are in their best interests and in the best interests of the community.

An evaluation plan was then constructed to define the aspects of the HOPE program which would be subject to evaluation (see EVALUATION PLAN). An evaluation plan is the formal representation of a strategy for the collection of performance information, a systematic and complete description of intended evaluation activity. The information needed to address each evaluation question was specified and the source of that information was designated. The designated sources of information included a records and documents search, a student survey, interviews

HAMILTON OPTIONAL PROGRAM for EDUCATION

EVALUATION PLAN

CONCERN	QUESTION	DESIGN REFERENT	INFORMATION NEEDED	SOURCE OF INFORMATION	TIMELINES
ACADEMIC PROGRESS	Is there empirical evidence that HOPE students are making academic progress?	2.0	1991-1992 & 1992-1993 Credits earned, Proficiency Test results, Dropout, Attendance, & Discipline records of specified HOPE students	Student records from Hamilton High School and from HOPE school	Collection of 1991-1992 data can begin anytime; collection of 1992-1993 data will take place after the 1992-1993 school year
SUPPORT	Is the support provided to HOPE students of the appropriate kind and of adequate intensity so as to accomplish program goals?	3.0	Impressions, beliefs, & feelings of those involved in & affected by HOPE, or those with knowledge of the HOPE school program	Interviews with students, parents, teachers, & agency & community representatives with knowledge of the HOPE school; Observations at HOPE school	Interviews will take place over the course of the 1992-1993 school year

CULTURE	Do students sense a caring and concerned environment? Do students believe that the school staff is genuinely interested in & concerned about their success & well-being?	3.1	Impressions, beliefs, & feelings of students & parents	Interviews with HOPE students & parents; Observations conducted at HOPE school; Survey given to HOPE students & to selected students at Hamilton High School	Observations & interviews conducted over the course of the 1992-1993 school year; Survey conducted during the second semester of the 1992-1993 school year
EMPLOY-ABILITY OF STUDENTS	Are students able to voice sufficient knowledge of processes & indicate possession of the attitudes & skills necessary to get & keep a job?	4.0	Knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, understandings, values, & impressions of HOPE students	Entry/Exit interviews with a specified number of HOPE students; Oservations at HOPE school	Entry interviews will be conducted at the beginning of the 1992-1993 school year; Exit interviews will be conducted at the end of the third quarter of the 1992-1993 school year
DECISION-MAKING	Do HOPE students feel a connectedness to the community & the society which influences them to make decisions that are in their best interest & in the best interest of the community & society?	2.0 3.0 4.0	Beliefs, attitudes, feelings, impressions, & values of HOPE students	Entry/Exit interviews with a specified number of HOPE students; Observations at HOPE school	Entry interviews will be conducted at the beginning of the 1992-1993 school year; Exit interviews will be conducted at the end of the third quarter of the 1992-1993 school year

with students, parents, and adults knowledgeable about the HOPE program, and observations of the HOPE school program.

Records Search. The attendance records, discipline records, credits earned, and Proficiency Test results of selected first-year 1992 HOPE students were compared with the performances of these selected students for the year prior to their entry into HOPE school, the 1991-1992 school year.

The students attracted to at-risk alternative schools are generally highly transient; HOPE school enrolled over 180 students for the 1992-1993 school year even though 100 is the approximate capacity of the school. As some students were enrolled but never attended, dropped out, were expelled, graduated, returned to the conventional high school, or incarcerated, other students were enrolled to take their place. Only the records of first-year HOPE students who arrived at HOPE school during September of the 1992-1993 school year and who were still attending reasonably regularly through December were examined. Thirty-two students met these criteria. The data collected from the record examination of HOPE students were utilized to address the evaluation concern of "the academic progress of HOPE students."

Interviews. Extensive informal interviews were conducted with thirteen randomly selected HOPE school students in September of the 1992-1993 school year and again with the same students in March of 1993. Three of the selected students were no longer at HOPE school in March of 1993 and were replaced with students who had been at HOPE school for at least five months. Three HOPE school dropouts were also interviewed.

The four evaluation concerns of "support for HOPE students," "a caring and concerned environment at HOPE school," "employability of HOPE students," and "the degree of connectedness of HOPE students to the community and society" were discussed with the interviewees. All interviews were taped and transcribed.

Six parents of currently enrolled HOPE students, two parents of HOPE school dropouts, and seven adults who had some first-hand knowledge of the HOPE school program were interviewed (see Appendix A for interview format). The "knowledgeable adults" included a counselor who worked with HOPE students, a HOPE school teacher, the Youth Coordinator of the Butler County PIC/ETA office, the Hamilton City Schools Director of Student Services, the Program Coordinator and the Executive Director of the Booker T. Washington Community Center, and a Butler County Probation Officer. The evaluation concerns of "support for HOPE school students" and "a caring and concerned environment at HOPE school" were discussed with the interviewees. All interviews were taped and transcribed. Information derived from adult interviews served as evidence with which to address the evaluation concerns of "support for HOPE students" and "a caring and concerned environment at HOPE school."

Survey. An attitude and climate survey which was constructed by the Cincinnati Public Schools and administered to both at-risk alternative high school students and conventional high school students in the Cincinnati Public Schools was utilized in this study (see Appendix B for Student Survey). The survey was administered to 72 Hope school students and 115 Hamilton High School students. Of the 115 Hamilton High School students surveyed, 41 students were Advanced Placement (upper level), 40 students were A-level (average level), and 33 students were G-1 (lower

level). Information from this survey was used to address the evaluation concerns of "support for HOPE students" and "a caring and concerned environment at HOPE school."

Observations. Five observations were conducted at HOPE school over the course of the 1992-1993 school year. The observations took place before school as students were arriving, in the four classrooms, in the HOPE school office, and after school as students were leaving. Extensive notes were taken in an attempt to gather evidence relevant to the four evaluation concerns of "support," "environment," "employability," and "decision-making." Anecdotal records were kept on the routines and procedures of the building, the teachers, and the students, on teacher/student, teacher/teacher, student/student, and student/visitor interactions, and on informal conversations between the researcher and HOPE school members.

EVIDENCE AND CONCLUSIONS

Evaluation Question #1 - Is there empirical evidence that HOPE students are making academic progress?

Over 180 students were enrolled at HOPE school over the course of the 1992-1993 school year. A good number of these students, for a variety of reasons, did not show up, were expelled, were incarcerated, or left the school at some point. Only the records of first year HOPE students were examined so as to more accurately gage the impact of the HOPE program. Also, students must have attended HOPE long enough to have been influenced by the HOPE staff; the evaluator and program staff agreed that this length of time would be set at approximately four months. Thirty-two

students fit these criteria. A records and documents search was conducted to obtain data regarding the academic progress of the 32 identified students. These data are presented in Table 1.1.

By the end of the 1992-1993 school year, 24 of the 32 identified students were still actively involved in the HOPE program, 2 students had graduated with a high school diploma, 5 students had withdrawn themselves or had been withdrawn from the HOPE program, and 1 student had been expelled from the Hamilton City Schools.

TABLE 1.1

RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS SEARCH
ACADEMIC PROGRESS

CREDIT EARNED		PROFCY TESTS		ATTENDANCE		EXPULSIONS	
'91-'92	'92-'93	'91-'92	'92-'93	'91-'92	'92-'93	'91-'92	'92-'93
57	175	31/112 (28%)	12/59 (20%)	2,715.5 days	3,449.5 days	28	1

In order to benefit from an educational setting, students must attend regularly and conduct themselves in a manner which enables them to remain in that educational setting. Although attendance did not increase significantly, it must be understood that the population of students attracted to at-risk alternative schools is characterized by myriad problems and situations which interfere with school attendance. The 32 identified students attended a total of 2,715.5 school days during the 1991-1992 school year, the year before they attended HOPE school, and a total of 3,449.5 school days during their first year at HOPE school (the 2 HOPE students who graduated at mid-year of the 1992-1993 school year

are projected as "present" for the second semester of the 1992-1993 school year). An average attendance rate of 108 days per school year is probably enough to keep students connected to school and to enable them to fully benefit from the educational program.

It is the policy of most schools in Ohio to expel students for only one semester of school at a time. Each of the 32 identified could have been expelled twice per school year. There were 28 incidents of expulsion among the 32 identified students for the 1991-1992 school year but just one expulsion within the group in question for the 1992-1993 school year, the group's first year at HOPE school. This dramatic reduction in expulsions within the identified group of HOPE students from the 1991-1992 school year to the 1992-1993 school year is probably due to a combination of factors including greater student identification with the school, increased student motivation to comply with rules, increased staff motivation to keep students in school, and a more tolerant atmosphere within the school itself.

The identified group of HOPE students dramatically increased its rate of credits earned during the 1992-1993 school year. The per student average of credits earned by the group during the 1991-1992 school year was 1.8 as compared to an average of 5.46 for the 1992-1993 school year. A yearly individual credits-earned average of 5.46 would enable a HOPE student to graduate from high school on schedule. This impressive increase in credits earned is probably due to a number of factors including "continuous progress" academic organization, a more receptive atmosphere, a smaller school, smaller class sizes, more help from teachers, and increased student motivation.

As a group, the 32 identified HOPE students passed 31 of the 112 Proficiency Tests attempted during the 1991-1992 school year for a 28% passage rate. The identified group passed 12 of the 59 Proficiency Tests attempted during the 1992-1993 school year for a 20% passage rate. The decrease in tests attempted for the 1992-1993 school year is due to tests already passed, exemptions for handicapping conditions, and student absences during the testing periods. Obviously, the rate of passage of Proficiency Tests actually decreased for the identified group from the 1991-1992 to the 1992-1993 school year. This phenomenon is understandable, however, as students will pass the Proficiency Tests which are personally more manageable for them more quickly. Then, in the later testing rounds, students will face only the tests which are more difficult for them. (statewide, the rate of passage of Ohio students decreases rather dramatically after the first year of Proficiency Testing) A two year average passage rate of 48% means that most of the students in the identified group, after two years of testing, are on schedule to complete the Proficiency Tests in time to graduate with their classes. Because students deal only with the tests which are most difficult for them in the later rounds of Proficiency Testing, it can be assumed that the identified group's rate of passage for the 1993-1994 school year will continue to decline from its 1991-1992 rate. Some students within the identified group of HOPE students, then, will not pass all of the Proficiency Tests so as to earn a high school diploma on schedule.

It is concluded, then, that the performance of any HOPE student who attends consistently for at least four months can be expected to match the average academic performance of the 32 selected HOPE students. Is is also concluded, from the examination of the records and documents, that HOPE

students are making sufficient academic progress so as to enable them to graduate from high school on schedule. That is, the performance of HOPE school is meeting the standard for this evaluation area.

Evaluation Question #2 - Is the support provided to HOPE students of the appropriate kind and of adequate intensity so as to accomplish program goals?

At-risk young people are characterized by multiple, intense behavioral, social, psychological, family, personal, and sexual problems. The HOPE school student body is a typical group of at-risk youth. The need for support for HOPE students is clearly evident from interviews with HOPE students, parents, and selected adults with knowledge of HOPE school.

Adult C: Schools face a wealth of problems students have today that school personnel have little or no experience in dealing with.

Adult B: Over 50% of Hamilton parents have no high school diploma and kids do not have that value either - I believe that some parents discourage kids from school so they are not outdone by their own kids. The kids need support from home but they face abuse, neglect, ... they don't even know who is sleeping in their house tonight.

Adult D: At-risk kids have social, sexual, family, emotional problems, can't read, or are bored ... must pinpoint the real problem(s), must talk about the real issues and concerns important to these kids ... must really get into the child, what's happening with them totally ... it is kind of a whole social issue.

Adult G: Students are overwhelmed with their personal and home life, and they bring it to school with them ... other things, roadblocks, come into play ... must address the whole child, build skills and deal with the "baggage."

Parent F: Our daughter had to withdraw because she had a baby and someone at school was going to kill her and her baby.

Student F: I couldn't come to school this week because my boyfriend shot someone and I'm a witness.

Many claim that the primary responsibility for support rests with home and that parent support is and should be sufficient to keep students in school. Often parents are blamed; interviewees claimed "parents don't take education seriously" and "parents don't want to argue with their kids, it is easier to let them sit at home." But parents and knowledgeable adults testify to a different story.

Parent D: I'd take him in the front door and he'd walk right out the back door - what do you want me to do?

Parent E: I did everything on God's green earth, I tried everything, I don't know what else I could have done.

Parent C: If they're gonna go, they're gonna go, there's not a whole lot parents can do.

Adult F: Before I took this job, if you told me a kid wasn't going to school, I'd say, "Well, make 'em!" Now I know it isn't as easy as it seems or sounds.

There is considerable evidence that the HOPE staff is providing support for HOPE students. When asked "Has the HOPE staff been of help with school-related/life problems," all students responded in the affirmative. When asked "Who is really interested in and supportive of your efforts in school," eight of the thirteen students interviewed identified the HOPE school or individual HOPE staff members. All but one of the parents interviewed were enthusiastic about the support provided students at HOPE school.

Observations at HOPE school confirmed a congenial, supportive, and reassuring environment. Students seemed comfortable interacting with teachers and were quick to testify to teacher helpfulness. Teacher comments such as "you guys did really well on these number columns" and "you surprise me with all you know" occurred regularly. When a student agonized, "there is no way I'll pass this test," the teacher responded, "sure there is, but if you still have problems, next Tuesday you and I will go over it together, when your mind is fresh." When a student asked if it was time to put the books away the teacher answered, "yes, but you've been working so hard, I thought I'd leave you alone." Easy, informal conversations between teachers and groups of students before and after class about jobs, hunting, dates, sports, and other topics of interest to young people were regularly observed at HOPE.

During a one-week period in March of 1993, a community Business Partnership representative, a district Drug and Alcohol Counselor, a district Reading Laboratory Tutor, a district Vocational Recruiter, a county Project Partnership counselor, and several high school counselors were observed making contact with HOPE students.

The results of a climate survey administered to HOPE students and to selected Hamilton High School students indicate that HOPE students sense a significant degree of support from the HOPE school and staff. Items from the student climate survey which deal specifically with "support" were selected and utilized to address the evaluation question of "support for HOPE students." The number of HOPE students answering in the affirmative on the selected items was consistently high; an average of 76.4% of HOPE students answered in the affirmative on "support" survey items. HOPE students were significantly more positive about the support

they experienced at school than their counterparts at the conventional high school; their average positive responses were 22.8% higher than the average positive responses of the Hamilton High School students. Surprisingly, students in the lowest academic level at the conventional high school (G-1). those students most comparable to HOPE students. were slightly more positive on "support" survey items than the conventional high school students as a whole. (see Table 1.2 - STUDENT SUPPORT)

When asked "What kinds of assistance do/will you need in order to continue to go to school and to do well in school." HOPE students responded "stay out of trouble." "don't get suspended." "energy." "encouragement." "help with personal problems." "transportation." "baby-sitting help." and "motivation." The most predominant responses. however. were "stay away from kids who are a bad influence" and "I never thought about it." When asked "Who in the community could help you with problems and how can you find and contact them." HOPE students answered "Salvation Army." "Catholic Services." "church." Congressmen." "shelters." "the LEAP people." "the Food Pantry." "parents." "Project Partnership." "parents." "the Welfare." and "the Sisters." The most frequent responses. however. included either some kind of reference to school personnel or "friends." There was no appreciable difference between answers given during the first round of interviews in September and the second interviews in March.

Evidence from student interviews indicates that "mentoring" might be an area of considerable promise in building support systems for HOPE students. Five HOPE students claimed that someone outside their immediate family and unconnected with the school was highly influential in their continuing educational efforts. Students provided the following

STUDENT SUPPORT - TABLE 1.2

SECONDARY STUDENT SURVEY
HAMILTON CITY SCHOOLS
(1992-1993)

QUESTION	GROUP	YES	NO	UNDECIDED
1. School helps me feel good about myself.	HOPE	66%	18%	16%
	BIG BLUE	32%	33%	35%
	G-1	33%	33%	34%
2. My teachers praise me when I work hard.	HOPE	71%	16%	13%
	BIG BLUE	43%	45%	12%
	G-1	66%	33%	1%
9. I feel like I really belong in this school.	HOPE	79%	11%	9%
	BIG BLUE	43%	37%	19%
	G-1	42%	47%	10%
12. I am proud of the work I do in school.	HOPE	78%	7%	15%
	BIG BLUE	62%	22%	15%
	G-1	60%	25%	15%
16. I feel safe at school.	HOPE	77%	6%	16%
	BIG BLUE	48%	28%	24%
	G-1	48%	33%	18%
17. I am usually happy at school.	HOPE	75%	16%	9%
	BIG BLUE	51%	29%	19%
	G-1	45%	36%	19%
19. My parents have visited my school this year.	HOPE	62%	36%	1%
	BIG BLUE	59%	38%	0%
	G-1	47%	52%	0%
21. My teachers care about me.	HOPE	76%	5%	19%
	BIG BLUE	55%	9%	35%
	G-1	60%	6%	33%
22. My teachers tell me I can learn.	HOPE	90%	4%	5%
	BIG BLUE	75%	19%	5%
	G-1	79%	15%	6%
24. My teachers give me extra help when I need it.	HOPE	90%	4%	5%
	BIG BLUE	68%	19%	13%
	G-1	66%	18%	15%

responses to the question "Who is really interested in and supportive of your efforts in school."

Student I: The cop on Main Street and the people at the gas station ... they sit down and talk to me ... I want to prove to them I can graduate.

Student L: My friend _____. Whenever I need a pep talk ... sometimes its not comfortable because she tells me the truth ... she says she cares more about me than I do, she likes me more than I like myself.

Student M: My _____, that's why I came here ... I did it for him, so I wouldn't disappoint him.

Student H: If it was up to me I'd quit. I keep coming because of _____. I'd like to tell them I finished school.

Student F: My boyfriend is about the only one, he's really picky about my going to school.

Student D: I want to go to college to be a Probation Officer, mine is my role model.

The evidence provided through the testimony of students, parents, and adults knowledgeable of the HOPE school, a student climate survey, and observations at HOPE school suggests that HOPE school is meeting the standard with respect to support for students. Most students, parents, and knowledgeable adults praised the support provided by HOPE school. On the student climate survey, HOPE students were consistently positive about their school and significantly more positive than conventional students were about the conventional school. Observations conducted at HOPE school documented significant efforts on the part of HOPE staff members to provide support for HOPE students.

While HOPE students are receiving considerable support from the HOPE staff and through the HOPE school program, the evidence suggests that the

HOPE staff has not experienced much success with building support networks for HOPE students outside the school setting. Community support systems for HOPE students would not only assist students in achieving HOPE program goals but would also increase the chances of HOPE students experiencing successful and productive lives after separation from the school setting. Granted, developing student connections outside the school setting is difficult, time-consuming, and contrary to traditional school practice.

It must also be remembered that at-risk students are sometimes overwhelmed by their problems and cannot function in an educational setting regardless of the support provided. And, influencing seriously at-risk students is a long-term endeavor, at best. The HOPE school and HOPE staff members must have sufficient time and contact with at-risk students before they can be reasonably held accountable for student outcomes. Most of the members of the selected group of first-year HOPE students who attended regularly for at least four months, however, performed well enough to be on schedule to graduate with their classes. It can reasonably be assumed, then, that most at-risk students who attend HOPE school regularly will experience enough support to enable them to be successful in school and achieve program goals.

Evaluation Question #3 - Do students sense a caring and concerned environment at HOPE school? Do students at HOPE believe that the school staff is genuinely interested in and concerned about their success and well-being?

Interviews with students, parents, and knowledgeable adults provided overwhelming evidence that the HOPE staff has been successful in developing a "caring and concerned" environment at the HOPE school.

Student A: Amazing, I never thought there'd be a school like this. At Wilson, teachers just talk to each other. Teachers here are more friendly and you can talk to them about anything. At HOPE, teachers are more intuned to what kids think, more worried about what we feel. My motivation used to be 0%, now it's 100%, I changed my attitude when I came here.

Student D: Teachers here are a lot nicer, they care about me, they help you out and stuff.

Student E: Teachers take their time and go to each kid separately. I like it here, everybody here gets along. I don't like being with other people, I'm comfortable here.

Student G: Teacher _____ is the fatherly type, tells you things you don't want to hear but know you should. Teachers knew our names immediately; they know your life; they ask about your life and job; say "hi" to your mom; its personal, like friendship; at HOPE, everybody is the teacher's pet.

Student H: If someone cares about you, your more willing to do it, you try harder.

Student L: At other schools, teachers just do it for the money. At HOPE, teachers do it because they want to.

Student M: They treat you like an adult here, not like a child. I love it here, its great! They don't lecture you here, they talk to you. When I come here, I want to work . . . was never like this at my other schools. Their cool, there when you need them.

Student Dropout A: If you really want to learn, HOPE is a very pleasant place. Teachers come around to you, you don't have to go to them, and the other kids are helpful too.

Student Dropout B: If HOPE teachers were at Big Blue, students would probably take it as a joke. If Big Blue teachers went to HOPE, it would probably fall apart.

Parent A: Teachers care, I mean they really care! At HOPE, deviancy is expected, nobody is expected to walk the straight and narrow. I had pretty much given up on my son . . .conceded that he would be a high school dropout . . . they give praise for little things. I think they do an excellent job, I'm their number one fan . . . if not for HOPE these kids would be expelled and written off by society, I know these kids, they were pretty much headed there.

Parent B: My son is much happier at HOPE . . . likes it 100% better . . . improving his grades. Teachers at HOPE care; I don't know how long we'd have kept _____ in school; he talks to teachers at HOPE about things that bother him; HOPE has helped him tremendously. Its like when a stranger comes in, so many numbers, [conventional] schools have forgotten about that kid's reality; all schools are saying is "hey, get into that book and learn!" There is more to it than book learning, and don't get me wrong, I'm all for learning, but if you can't show and teach a kid love and respect, I think this goes along with school and I think they've left this out of [conventional] school.

Parent D: He loves it there, goes every day . . . doing fantastic there . . . I have nothing but praise for the place.

Parent E: O God, that was a blessing when she went to HOPE, I tell you! She just fell in love with it at HOPE, she's doing real good. Without HOPE, _____ would be sent off someplace and I'd be in jail, that's the God's honest truth!

Parent F: If it wasn't for HOPE, she wouldn't be in school, she's doing great!

Parent G: You'd be surprised who's going to HOPE, nobody would believe these kids are going to school.

Adult A: HOPE has grown up well, I like the way they work with kids, the ideas they have, they don't always work, but there is no guarantee anything will work, not all kids respond to the HOPE approach, but many do. HOPE has been effective far beyond our expectations. We see kids on fire to get that diploma and get going; its gratifying to see responses like that from potential that was just lying dormant outside the school, amazing!

Adult B: (HOPE teacher) We sit down and talk with these kids; we try to break down the barriers between kids and authority figures. We provide some structure in their lives ... its more personal here, kids are not just a number. We become a pain for them, but they like someone to care, they count on you being there for them ... its an attitude, an approach of let's deal with your problems, you must play the hand that's dealt you and try to improve it; I think we're reaching some kids. The structure is geared toward kids; we come into their homes and try to establish rapport. The kids know we care about them, but we don't give them anything, don't give them breaks, we may be even harder on them.

Adult F: The kids I know at HOPE would not be doing well at a conventional school. Some are doing well at HOPE, a complete turn-around. At HOPE, they're making money, getting out early, they "fit in" at HOPE.

Adult G: HOPE is attempting to alter the environment to look after kids; keeping dropouts in school is an atmosphere, a personality thing. If at-risk students know the support, the acceptance, is there, on a daily basis, they will be more relaxed, then the job of educating them will actually be easier and less time-consuming overall.

It is important to consider the perceived differences between the environment of the HOPE school and the environment of other schools in Hamilton as related by a number of interviewees. Regardless of whether the negative perceptions of the conventional Hamilton schools are accurate, the point is that many interviewees **thought** HOPE was a better place to go to school.

Adult G: Hamilton High School is a numbers game; the benefit of the many over the few.

Student K: At regular school, teachers don't sit down and explain it to you - here they do.

Student L: At the other school, teachers are just doing it for the money, here, they do it because they care; if I skipped there, they really didn't care.

Student G: ... too many distractions at my other school.

Student F: There were too many kids at my old school; teachers were grouchy; its better to work on your own; get out early; not as many people; teachers don't lecture, they don't even teach - just help us when we need it.

Student E. I used to hate school, was afraid, you never know what was going to happen; I'm overweight, don't have the best clothes, I surely don't want to die in school. There's a big difference in teachers. Maybe Wilson teachers are under more stress, got lot more kids, and it might just be their attitudes, a few of them just think they're "it."

Student D: Here you don't run around the halls and get in trouble, that just happens in big schools. If HOPE teachers went back to regular school they wouldn't act like those teachers because they've been here for a while.

Student B: This is a place teachers help. If they didn't want to help, they'd be at Big Blue.

Student A: I don't think Wilson teachers would act like HOPE teachers even if they were here ... it must just be dumb luck that the right teachers ended up here.

Parent A: I don't think the administrators [at Hamilton High School] really care, it doesn't matter what the problems are ... still have to be at class on time, and not by going up the down stairwell. The high school is all routed, you can only go upstairs on one side of the building. Its a mindset, bell rings, class, bell rings, move - its like a big cattle call! Any deviancy, one step to the side, is reprimanded or punished in some way, individuality is not nourished, encouraged, just no personal affection there.

My one son just got out of an institution, was tucking his shirt in in the hallway, got Saturday School for indecent exposure. I called the school and told them my other son was in Juvenile Detention Center, four day later school called and told me if my son didn't come to school the Truant Officer would be sent out. What? Did his number come up or something?

I've been at school, its crazy ... will someone stand in the middle of the hallway and shout "hey, look at me" ... but probably get Saturday School for it, it seems to be their favorite thing. That high school, its the rule ladened ice house.

Parent C: What are the key points in decisions to drop out? You probably don't want to hear my answer, its Garfield Junior High! They push kids back out the door for any little thing ... low grades, problems with other kids, problems with administrators, by the time _____ got to the high school he had such a bad attitude, it didn't work for him.

Parent D: Schools should act like they want kids to attend . . . the police would take _____ to school and the principal would tell him to leave again. Teachers at the other schools are there just to teach, their attitude is "the heck with you, get out of here, I've done my job."

The results of the student climate survey support the contention that HOPE school provides a caring and concerned environment for students. HOPE students ranged from moderately positive to overwhelmingly positive on all survey items pertaining to the school environment and/or how students feel about their school. On all such items, HOPE students had significantly higher positive scores than students from the conventional high school. The greatest gaps between conventional and alternative school students occurred on the most significant items, (7) "I like MY school," (8) "My school is a good school," (9) "I feel like I really belong in this school," and (21) "My teachers care about me." (see Table 1.3 - SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT)

The results of observations at HOPE school concurred with interview and survey data. Students appeared relaxed and comfortable with HOPE staff members. HOPE teachers were generally positive and supportive, offering advice and encouragement on jobs, school work, relationships, and life situations.

The evidence indicates that the HOPE school is exceeding the standard in the evaluation area of "caring and concerned environment." The testimony of students, parents, and adults knowledgeable of the HOPE school, along with the results of the student climate survey, were

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT CHART - TABLE 1.3

SECONDARY STUDENT SURVEY HAMILTON CITY SCHOOLS (1992-1993)				
QUESTION	GROUP	YES	NO	UNDECIDED
1. School helps me feel good about myself.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	66% 32% 33%	18% 33% 33%	16% 35% 34%
2. My teachers praise me when I work hard.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	71% 43% 66%	16% 45% 33%	13% 12% 1%
3. I like school.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	58% 44% 51%	19% 37% 33%	20% 18% 15%
7. I like MY school.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	81% 51% 49%	5% 29% 38%	11% 19% 12%
8. My school is a good school.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	81% 51% 54%	6% 27% 29%	13% 22% 16%
9. I feel like I really belong in this school.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	79% 43% 42%	11% 37% 47%	9% 19% 10%
12. I am proud of the work I do in school.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	78% 62% 60%	7% 22% 25%	15% 15% 15%
14. I look forward to coming to school.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	49% 25% 28%	23% 48% 37%	28% 27% 34%
17. I am usually happy at school.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	75% 51% 45%	16% 29% 36%	9% 19% 19%
21. My teachers care about me.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	76% 55% 60%	5% 9% 6%	19% 35% 33%

overwhelmingly positive with regard to this aspect of the HOPE program. The HOPE school was clearly perceived as "different" and "better" than the conventional schools. Observations conducted at HOPE school confirmed that efforts toward "care and concern" were an integral part of the HOPE program.

Evaluation Question #4 - Are HOPE students able to voice sufficient knowledge of employment processes and indicate possession of the attitudes and skills necessary to secure and maintain an employment position?

HOPE school staff members requested that employers of HOPE students not be contacted in conjunction with this study. Staff members felt that employer appraisals would not give adequate consideration to the particular difficult circumstances of individual HOPE students. Staff members held that, regardless of the progress of HOPE students, they would always be compared to non-HOPE student employees with less difficult life situations in job performance appraisals. In accordance with the wishes of HOPE staff members, employers of HOPE students were not interviewed. Only evidence collected from student interviews and HOPE school observations was utilized in addressing the evaluation question of employability skills.

The 13 HOPE students who were interviewed seemed to have an accurate perception of their current employment status; that is, they were clearly aware of the job market and what positions were currently available to them considering their age, knowledge, and skill level. When asked "What kinds of jobs are you qualified for right now," students

responded "fast food," "gutter work," "restaurants," "tire place," "department store," "heavy machines," "salesperson," "cleaning," "babysitting," "taking messages," and "nursing home." The students became generally more realistic over the seven month period between the first interviews in September of 1992 and the second interviews in March of 1993 with respect to their future employment. The responses of the interviewed students to questions about their "future plans" and their "ideal job" are presented in Table 1.4.

Student responses to "How does one go about getting a job" included "fill out applications and turn them in," "do resumes," "go around to places and talk to the managers," "call around to places," "look in the telephone book," "check the newspapers," "ask friends and relatives (networking), and "look for signs in windows and on marquees." When asked about "reasons people lose jobs" and "the perfect employee" students offered "be clean," "hard worker," "fast but good work," "be on time," "do your work right" "dependable," "not following directions," "be nice," "attitude toward other people," "having an attitude," "do your best," "calling off sick when your not," "taking orders," "standing around not working," "stealing from work," "making problems," "horseplay," "getting along with the manager," and "do a different job if asked to." All of the HOPE students who were interviewed demonstrated some familiarity with the rudiments of finding and keeping a job.

Nine of the 13 HOPE students interviewed voiced concern about their bosses' opinions of them because the references of their superiors would effect their chances of getting another job in the future. Ten of the 13 students acknowledge that some of their job-seeking and job-maintenance knowledge and skills were acquired at HOPE school.

HOPE staff members were observed conducting formal "employability skills" lessons and "job progress" discussions as well as offering informal advice and holding "gab sessions" about jobs. HOPE staff members also spend considerable time visiting students at job stations, as is required of OWE programs.

Table 1.4

STUDENT RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS "WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS" AND WHAT IS YOUR IDEAL JOB"	
RESPONSES IN SEPTEMBER	**RESPONSES IN MARCH**
Cop	Cop
Fashion Designer	Drug Outreach Director
Professional Ballplayer	Computer Operator
Nurse	Cook
Going into business with father	Going into business with father
Veterinarian	Factory work - Hamilton Fixtures
Follow boyfriend to Army	Computer programmer
Defense Attorney	X-Ray technician
Jewelry store owner	Marines
Working with animals	Probation Officer
Computers	Data Processing
Graduate	Go to a technical college
Forest Ranger	Cosmetologist

Evidence gathered concerning the "employability" concern indicates that the HOPE program is meeting the standard in this area. Observations

conducted at the HOPE school produced evidence that the HOPE staff is attempting to familiarize students with job-seeking and job-maintenance knowledge and skills. The results of interviews with HOPE students suggest that these students have acquired sufficient knowledge and skills so as to get and keep a job.

A word of caution, however, is certainly in order. The employability preparation afforded to HOPE students qualifies HOPE students for employment only on the absolute periphery of the economy. Successful, productive workers of the future will have to take initiative, work independently, be creative, work collaboratively, and solve problems. Of course, educational programs must begin working with students at whatever level students are found to be on. And, statistically, young people are certainly far better off with a high school diploma than without one. But to imply that a high school diploma or the HOPE school program, in and of itself, will enable a young person to acquire employment in a secure, quality position with compensation so as to provide a decent life for an individual and/or a family may be a cruel hoax.

A Butler County social worker probably stated the situation most clearly when she claimed, "It doesn't matter how good of a job the HOPE school does in preparing its students for the job market, it may be doing an exemplary job at this, but unless business and other elements of the community are willing to do their part, willing to place these kids into permanent, secure, reasonably paying positions, the efforts of programs like that of HOPE school will ultimately be fruitless." The Job Development Center, the vocational training wing of Hamilton High School, claims to place approximately 85% of its graduates in their field of training, presumably into relatively quality positions, yet there is very little

connection between the Job Development Center and HOPE school. Co-ops, apprenticeships, partnerships, job-shadowing, and post-graduate trade training are all viable options for improving the employment fortunes of the socially and economically disadvantaged, but these efforts all require substantial investments of time, personnel, energy, commitment, and, of course, resources.

Evaluation Question #5 - Do HOPE students feel a connectedness to the community and to the society which influences them to make decisions that are in their best interests and in the best interests of the community and the society?

The 13 students who were interviewed at HOPE school were asked to "Describe a good and decent person" and to "Describe a responsible person." The students were then asked about differences between the "good and decent" and "responsible" persons they described and themselves. There was no appreciable difference between the answers given in September and those given in March, but the two sets of answers were very consistent. The answers that were offered by the 13 selected HOPE students indicate that they have a grasp of the concept of a "good, decent, responsible person" and, clearly, their image of such a person would match that of most "good citizens" in any community. Furthermore, the 13 HOPE students indicated that they either were "good, decent, responsible" persons or that they were somewhere on the "good, decent, responsible" end of such a spectrum. The students seemed to believe that "good, decent, and responsible" was the kind of person they should be and were

trying to be. Individual student responses to these questions are presented in Table 1.5 and Table 1.6.

The responses of the 13 HOPE students to the questions "What is your responsibility to society" and "What is society's responsibility to you" did not indicate that the students sensed any exchange of commitment between themselves as individuals and the community or the society. A significant number of answers dealt with "cleaning up" or "keeping the place clean," there were a number of trivial answers such as "help old ladies," "stay out of trouble," and "don't drive people crazy," and several answers in the "don't bother me and I won't bother you" vein.

Although the HOPE students indicated that people littered because they were "lazy" or "don't care," 9 of the 13 admitted that they littered anyway. Only one student was even vaguely familiar with United Way. Even though a number of students claimed that they would donate money to a community volunteer, most students were extremely noncommittal about volunteering their own time.

Answers to the question "Who in the community do you feel genuinely cares about you" were dominated by "friends", "boy/girl friend", and "HOPE staff members."

Most of the 13 HOPE students could not name a local or state elected official. Their answers to the question "What would your responsibilities be if you were elected to public office" were shallow and superficial. The individual answers to this question were dominated by "clean" and "I don't know" and included such responses as "make sure everybody gets their fair share," "public officials make a big deal of nothing and ignore important things," "get rid of extras like Principals," "help stray animals," and "make 18 the drinking age."

TABLE 1.5

"GOOD AND DECENT PERSON" RESPONSES		
SEPTEMBER RESPONSES	**MARCH RESPONSES**	**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DESCRIBED PERSON AND INTERVIEWEE**
don't get in trouble, willing to try	takes responsibility, works, goes to school	in the middle
good natured, good attitude, willing to do it	treat everyone the way you want to be treated	I'm pretty decent, yes
nice to everyone, don't start fights	does what told, if make a mess, clean it up	pretty close
everybody's got some good in them	does something for someone & doesn't expect anything in return	usually
honest, helpful, cares about others	mind own business, stay out of trouble, respectable	yeah, I am one
if people holler at you, don't yell certain things back	don't do nothing wrong, goody-goody	uhmmmmm, yeah
think things through, consider consequences, right from wrong	cares about others, goes out of way to help	I'm in between
friendly, try to do something with your life	nice, friendly, don't judge people by what they wear	I think I'm a good person, everybody likes me
be church goer, try hard, care and show they care	care about others, respect for feelings and property	I'm not perfect, but in the middle
good to you, good to others, hard worker	trust, good advice, help you stay out of trouble	I think I am
nice, real friendly, someone who ain't on probation	someone who takes care of their business	people think since I have a baby I'm not so good
don't talk about you behind your back, treat you good	don't lie, steal, fake disability	I think I'm a good person
nice, not being bad, don't kill someone over a piece of bread	Honest, dependable, trustworthy	I'm a 6 or 7 out of 10

TABLE 1.6

"RESPONSIBLE PERSON" RESPONSES		
SEPTEMBER RESPONSES	**MARCH RESPONSES**	**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DESCRIBED PERSON AND INTERVIEWEE**
go to school, keep a job	does his job	I do pretty good
if you need to get something done, he does it	if you borrow something, bring it back and don't break it	I'm pretty responsible
do your job right, do waht your told, be on time	someone you can trust	pretty fairly
be on time, do what your supposed to do, do things you don't have to do	if someone expects you do do something, do it	I'm in the ballpark
clean your own room	do what your told, take care of yourself	I'm getting there
if you've got something to do, make sure it gets done; someone you can count on	pay your bills on time	Yes, I'm responsible
dependable, put others' needs before your own	do what your supposed to do without being told	I'm a lot better than I was last year
get to school on time, willing to work	do your school work, do your job	I am responsible
punctual, dressed correctly, don't give anyone lip	someone you can count on, who will always be there; don't call in sick if your not	I'm pretty responsible, but I have some problems with money
Clean up the worksite, be safe with tools	if your told to do something, do it; come to school & get good grades	I think I qualify
someone who doesn't just live on unemployment	get done what you need to do	I take care of myself & my son & my kid brother with no help from anyone, I think I qualify
don't cause people trouble	if you have to do something, do it	not sure, sometimes
take care of your family, pay bills, don't blow money	do your responsibilities first, then do other things	I am a 9 out of 10

One could assert that HOPE students have the potential to be "good citizens" of the community since they have begun to formulate a description of a "good, decent, responsible" person, their ideas of such a person are compatible with that of most community members, and HOPE students perceive of themselves as, in the words of one student, "in the ballpark" of being "good, decent, responsible" persons.

A "sense of community" is a bond of commitment between the unit and the individual forged in and by an environment of trust and caring which nurtures improvement, growth, and success. "Community" is a binding force which draws individuals together into a more or less harmonious interactive network. These interactions have meaning and significance for the individuals. Common values define what is cared for and cared about. The values of the individual and the community match and shape each other, that is, the individual cares what others think and expect; he/she has a personal stake in meeting expectations and conforming to norms of good and proper behavior. The individual and the community are bonded together in a reciprocal understanding of duty, responsibility, and purpose.

Individuals are defacto members of a number of interlocking communities: the family, the neighborhood, the school, the city, the state, the nation, and humanity. When such communities acknowledge, affirm, and support the individual, demonstrate care and concern for the individual, and attempt to meet the needs of the individual, the individual is likely to bond with that community. Bonding is achieved when individuals alter their behavior to conform to the norms and requirements of a particular community. If bonding to a particular community is weak or nonexistent, individuals are inclined to reject that community, acting without regard for the feelings and expectations of other community

members. Helping seriously at-risk students develop a sense of community can be a difficult task, since such youth are not generally treated well within their communities.

Organization, structure, tradition, and other factors cause the development of community to be an especially challenging endeavor for schools. Gregory and Smith (1987) claim that "mass education, the high school's forte two generations ago, has become its Achilles heel," that "the high school has become a very difficult institution to commit to or identify with," and that "any reasonable sense of community has been lost in the typical high school" (pp. 10, 5, 22).

Interview, survey, and observation data suggest that HOPE school has been successful in reversing the trend of student isolation, alienation, and estrangement. The HOPE staff has provided the context within which a sense of school community can take root and grow, an atmosphere of acceptance, belonging, trust, and loyalty. A significant number of at-risk students participate happily in school life, vandalism is virtually nonexistent, relaxed and respectful adult/student relationships flourish, and students and staff seem engaged in a spirit of common enterprise. The success of HOPE school in developing a sense of school community can be viewed as a promising first step in the reconnecting of at-risk youth to larger communities.

There is little evidence, however, that HOPE students have developed a commitment to their neighborhood, the city, the state, or the nation or that their behavior is governed by any sense of committal reciprocity with any other community outside the HOPE school. Therefore, with respect to the evaluation area of "connectedness to community," it is concluded that the HOPE school is not meeting the standard.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The education of seriously at-risk youth is a pressing and growing problem. Clearly, at-risk students need more than just remediation, trying harder, or tending to business. Although the educational landscape is littered with failed at-risk approaches and programs, a number of promising educational strategies have been advanced for dealing with seriously at-risk students. This country has recently experienced an explosion of alternative secondary schools designed and developed as a means of effectively meeting the needs of at-risk youth. Many educators and knowledgeable authorities have called for specific evaluation information on particular at-risk programs and alternative schools (Wehlage, 1986; Hamilton, 1986; Green & Baker, 1986; Smith, 1991; West, 1991; Hodgkinson, 1985, 1989; McDill, et. al., 1990). As Wehlage (1986) explains, each at-risk program is unique, implementation is more than a technical activity, and carefully drawn up plans do not guarantee success.

This study was conducted in response to the need for detailed evaluation information on specific at-risk programs. This study evaluated the effectiveness of the HOPE alternative school, with respect to certain critical program components, as a method of meeting the academic needs of seriously at-risk students. This study found that the HOPE school program, as a whole, is meeting the needs of its at-risk students, if the needs of at-risk youth are defined narrowly, that is, if the needs are determined to be, and are limited to, achieving a high school diploma and securing and maintaining some type of employment. Certainly the HOPE program has been effective as some students have been influenced, indeed, have had their lives "turned around" through the intervention of the HOPE school. Maintaining, improving, and expanding the HOPE

program, that is, securing a greater share of limited resources for the benefit of economically and politically powerless elements of the community will require courage and moral commitment on the part of community leaders and district officials.

Additional Issues which Surfaced Over the Course of the Evaluation Process

Over the course of this evaluation study, a number of issues came into focus which warrant some consideration. Since this study was not designed to investigate these issues, little or no documentation is available to support the following recommendations and suggestions. These points may, however, have some impact on the future successful operation of the HOPE school program and those of other at-risk alternative schools.

1. The establishment of a mission statement, program goals, and performance objectives, in other words, an agreement between district officials and HOPE staff as to what the HOPE program will be held accountable for, would assist the HOPE staff in focusing its energies and activities, would help other district personnel understand what the HOPE school is about, and would aid future program evaluations. As Conrath (1986) points out, "Many of our schools of choice are . . . flexible (fuzzy) on ends" (p. 2). It is imperative that at-risk alternatives make a conscious and concerted effort to define their missions, delineate goals and objectives, and communicate these to all relevant parties.

2. An orientation of new staff members, and all personnel who service at-risk alternative schools, to alternative schools and alternative education could promote a commonality of philosophy and approach which would

benefit the total program. Likewise, in-service for district officials and high school/junior high staff members on at-risk education and alternative schools could increase understanding of and appreciation for what at-risk alternative schools are trying to do and how they are trying to do it.

3. District officials should consider the provision of child care for at-risk alternative school students. Most of the parent/students at HOPE expressed serious anxiety over the difficulty of finding reliable, trustworthy baby-sitters.

4. District officials and at-risk alternative staff members might want to analyze and evaluate two implicit axioms which seemed to dominate the philosophy of HOPE school:

a. that the sole purpose of education is to get a job
b. that the sole purpose of the HOPE program is to get a diploma

5. A theme which echoes through the literature on at-risk students and alternative schools and was reinforced throughout this study is that there is no "one best way." At-risk kids are salvaged one at a time. The best programs are those which secure good people, then establish a framework within which the staff is provided the flexibility to address the unique needs of each student. "Alternative" means "different!"

6. It should be remembered that there is always pressure on alternative schools, from a number of different directions, to drift back toward, or become more like, conventional schools. A HOPE staff member claimed "we are going to change some things next year," a conventional school administrator proclaimed "we need HOPE to do some things differently next year," and a HOPE student disappointedly testified "HOPE is different somehow this year." As adult G explained, "you cannot come

into an alternative setting with old-style approaches . . . kids come into an alternative expecting something different, and if kids sense that it is not different, that it is just more of the same, it makes it even worse, it dashes their dreams!"

7. Discussions with HOPE students indicate that "mentoring" holds promise as a strategy for reaching at-risk students. Many spoke highly and with great reverence for certain "special persons" in their lives who had significant positive influences on them.

8. The size of schools was a recurring theme in discussions with HOPE students and their parents. Many railed against the "crowds" and "bigness" of the conventional junior highs and the conventional high school. "Small and intimate" was always viewed as a positive. Parents sometimes spoke of "sending their child away to school," even though this meant only a few blocks or across the river. Judging from the research connected with this study, it would seem impossible to overestimate the influence of school size on the effectiveness of educational programs for at-risk youth.

9. Some thought might be given to the way students are selected for or assigned to at-risk alternative schools as to the underlying philosophy of the selection process. Should every student who cannot function in or is expelled from conventional school be allowed a chance in an alternative program or should prospective students be prioritized as to their chances of success in the alternative program?

10. Some consideration should be given to at-risk alternative educational programs for junior high and middle schools. Many HOPE parents and students testified that the junior high school was where, in the words of one parent, "the wheels really fell off!"

11. Resources are, of course, always a consideration. But, some thought might be given to the extent that state, local, and individual school rules and regulations interfere with or take precedence over the welfare and success of students. (Examples of such rules and regulations are: state in-class time requirements per credit, prioritizing student enrollment according to PIC/ETA qualifications or other revenue-related criteria, at least one student complained that HOPE school teachers would not allow her to take books home to work, etc.)

12. Working with seriously at-risk students is often a challenge to one's attitude, motivation, and perspective. All those who come into contact with at-risk students must be careful to consistently convey the expectancy of success and to avoid implicit messages of anticipated failure. (Example is a guest speaker at HOPE who finished his presentation with "but if you folks don't [take my advice], at least I tried!")

13. Dealing with seriously at risk youth on a daily basis is a psychologically and emotionally draining endeavor. At least one staff member spoke of how working at HOPE was adversely affecting him and his family life. One of the critical elements of an at-risk program is "a dedicated cadre of teachers." Some acknowledgement should be given to and provisions made for the fact that dealing with seriously at-risk students is a "high burn-out" position.

Topics for Additional Research

1. HOPE school experienced a rather high turnover rate during its first two years of operation. Over 180 students were enrolled in HOPE school at one time or another over the course of the 1992-1993 school year.

Another study might investigate why a significant number of students who enrolled at HOPE school either dropped out or did not attend at all. It may be found that such students were too at-risk to manage school attendance or that their motivation was insufficient to prompt them to actively seek a high school diploma. If, however, evidence is brought to light which suggests that some element of the HOPE school or of the school district is wholly or partly responsible for students failing to attend HOPE school, this information would be of interest and value to at-risk program planners and decision-makers.

2. Over the course of this study, it became clear that a two hour interview only scratches the surface of what is really going on with seriously at-risk youth. Only extended interviews spread over a considerable period of time, in-depth case studies, could produce a reasonably accurate picture of the thought processes and the social/emotional factors that contribute to a decision to prematurely drop out, physically or mentally, from the education process.

3. Longitudinal studies, both those that follow the life successes of the graduates of alternative at-risk schools and those that track at-risk and potential at-risk youth through the elementary grades would be of great interest to at-risk program planners and decision-makers.

4. Compiling lists of characteristics of at-risk students or identifying groups of potential dropouts is a manageable task. Predicting the next student who will drop out is a much more complicated endeavor. It would be helpful to at-risk program staff and planners to better understand why some at-risk students persevere in their educational efforts and what factors or combinations of factors cause other students to give up.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW 2a: STUDENTS

EVALUATION CONCERN

Support

EVALUATION QUESTION

Is the support provided to HOPE students of the appropriate kind and of adequate intensity so as to accomplish program goals?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Conversation Starters
How does school fit into your life?
Why do you think societies have schools?
Of what value or benefit is school to you?
Who, besides yourself, is really interested in and supportive of your school efforts?

Additional Questions, Points, Key Words, Phrases
What are your reasons for going to school?
What are your reasons for NOT going to school?
What things interfere with your going to school and with your having success in school?
What kinds of assistance do will you need in order to continue to go to school and to do well in school?
Do you believe that the HOPE school staff has given you good advice about school-related problems and concerns?
Has the HOPE staff been of help with school-related problems?
Who in the community can help with your problems? How can you find and make contact with them?
Do you feel that your parents/guardians support you in your school efforts?

INTERVIEW 2b: STUDENTS

EVALUATION CONCERN

Culture

EVALUATION QUESTION

Do students sense a caring and concerned environment? Do they believe that the school staff is genuinely interested in and concerned about their success and well-being?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Conversation Starters
Can you tell me about this school?
What is a typical day like here?
What do you think is the purpose of this school?

Additional Questions, Points, Key Words, Phrases
Is it important to you that someone cares about you? Why? What difference does it make?
Do you believe the staff at HOPE school cares about? Why or why not? How do you know?
Do you believe the staff at your previous school cared about you? Why or why not?
What specific caring things does the staff at HOPE school do that the staff at your previous school did not do?

INTERVIEW 2c: STUDENTS

EVALUATION CONCERN

Employability of Students

EVALUATION QUESTION

Are students able to voice sufficient knowledge of processes and indicate possession of the attitudes and skills necessary to secure and maintain a job?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Conversation Starters
What are your future plans?
How does employment fit into your future plans?
How did things go with the jobs you have had?
What would your boss(es) say about you?

Additional Questions, Points, Key Words, Phrases
Do you have a job now?
Have you ever had a job?
Would you like to have a job?
What is your "ideal" job?
How does one find out where the jobs are?
How does one go about getting a job?
What kinds of jobs are you qualified for right now?
What did you do to get your last job?
What are some of the reasons people lose jobs?
What does it matter what your boss thinks of you?
What does it matter what your previous bosses think of you?
How did you come by your job-seeking knowledge and skill?
Describe the "perfect employee." What differences exist between that person and you?

INTERVIEW 2d: STUDENTS

EVALUATION CONCERN

Decision-Making

EVALUATION QUESTION

Do HOPE students feel a connectedness to the community and the society which influences them to make decisions that are in their best interests and in the best interests of the community and the society?

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Conversation Starters

What do you see as society's responsibility to you just because you are a member of the society?
What do you see as your responsibility to the society in which you live?

Additional Questions, Points, Key Words, Phrases

Who in this community do you feel genuinely cares about you?
Why do you think people litter?
What would your friends say if you refused to throw your fast-food bag out the car window?
How would they react if you reprimanded them for throwing trash out the car window?
Have you ever littered? Do you litter now?
Are you familiar with the United Way? (Explanation if necessary)
If a United Way volunteer came to you door, would you contribute?
Would you volunteer your own time to help the United Way?
When you have serious matters to talk over, who could you go to?
What would your responsibilities be if you were elected to public office? (mayor, city council, governor, senator)
What would you do if you saw a convenience store being robbed?
Describe a "good and decent person." What differences do you see between the person you have just described and yourself?
Describe a "responsible person." What differences do you see between the person you just described and yourself?

INTERVIEW 1: ADULTS

EVALUATION CONCERNS

Support

Culture

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Is the support provided to HOPE students of the appropriate kind and of adequate intensity so as the accomplish program goals?

Do students sense a caring and concerned environment? Do students believe that the school staff is genuinely interested in and concerned about their success and well-being?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How important do you believe the high school dropout problem is? Compared to other problems? Why have you assigned the high school dropout situation the particular level of significance that you have?

2. What are/have been your contacts with HOPE SCHOOL? How did you accumulate the knowledge and information you have regarding HOPE SCHOOL?

3. What is the purpose of HOPE SCHOOL, as you understand it?

4. What are the reasons a student drops out of school?
   Do you see the school as partly responsible for a student dropping out of school? Why/How?
   Do you see the community as partly responsible for a student dropping out of school? Why/How?
   Do you see the family of the student partly responsible for a student dropping out of school? Why/How?

5. How does a student eventually arrive at a decision to terminate formal schooling? What are the key points in time? The critical factors?

6. What must be done in order to keep potential dropouts in school?

7. Who do you feel has primary responsibility for keeping potential dropouts in school? The student? The family? The school? The community? Others?

8. What can a school do to help keep potential dropouts in school?

9. How well do you believe HOPE SCHOOL is doing with keeping potential dropouts in school?

10. How is HOPE SCHOOL different from Garfield Junior High, Washington Junior High, Wilson Junior High, or Hamilton High School?

11. What, if anything, could be done in Hamilton to help keep potential dropouts in school?

12. What do you think HOPE SCHOOL could do better/differently to keep potential dropouts in school?

APPENDIX B

SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY

SECONDARY STUDENT SURVEY
HAMILTON CITY SCHOOLS
(1992-1993)

HOPE = HOPE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL
BLUE = TOTAL HAMILTON HIGH STUDENTS SURVEYED (ALL LEVELS)
G-1 = "GENERAL" (NON-COLLEGE PREP) STUDENTS AT HAMILTON HIGH

QUESTION	GROUP	YES	NO	UNDECIDED
1. School helps me feel good about myself.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	66% 32% 33%	18% 33% 33%	16% 35% 34%
2. My teachers praise me when I work hard.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	71% 43% 66%	16% 45% 33%	13% 12% 1%
3. I like school.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	58% 44% 51%	19% 37% 33%	20% 18% 15%
4. I do well in my school work.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	87% 55% 45%	4% 19% 27%	8% 25% 27%
5. Discipline in my school is handled fairly.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	76% 48% 43%	9% 32% 39%	15% 19% 18%
6. My teachers want me in school every day.	HOPE BIB BLUE G-1	ALL YES		
7. I like MY school.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	81% 51% 49%	5% 29% 38%	11% 19% 12%
8. My school is a good school.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	81% 51% 54%	6% 27% 29%	13% 22% 16%
9. I feel like I really belong in this school.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	79% 43% 42%	11% 37% 47%	9% 19% 10%
10. There is good discipline in my school.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	75% 48% 45%	9% 27% 27%	16% 25% 27%

11. Most of my teachers like teaching.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	ALL YES		
12. I am proud of the work I do in school.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	78% 62% 60%	7% 22% 25%	15% 15% 15%
13. Most of the rules at my school are fair.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	89% 52% 57%	4% 29% 33%	7% 19% 10%
14. I look forward to coming to school.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	49% 25% 28%	23% 48% 37%	28% 27% 34%
15. I plan to stay in school until I graduate.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	ALL YES		
16. I feel safe at school.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	77% 48% 48%	6% 28% 33%	16% 24% 18%
17. I am usually happy at school.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	75% 51% 45%	16% 29% 36%	9% 19% 19%
18. I really believe that what I learn and do in school will help me in the real world when I graduate.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	79% 58% 57%	9% 23% 25%	12% 19% 18%
19. My parents have visited my school this year.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	62% 59% 47%	36% 38% 52%	1% 0% 0%
20. The things I learn at school are important.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	78% 53% 54%	7% 24% 27%	15% 22% 18%
21. My teachers care about me.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	76% 55% 60%	5% 9% 6%	19% 35% 33%
22. My teachers tell me I can learn.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	90% 75% 79%	4% 19% 15%	5% 5% 6%
23. My parents feel there is good discipline in my school.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	69% 46% 55%	8% 27% 25%	23% 25% 27%

24. My teachers give me extra help when I need it.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	90% 68% 66%	4% 19% 18%	5% 13% 15%
25. Students at my school are usually well behaved in class.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	69% 44% 42%	21% 30% 39%	9% 25% 18%
26. Students at this school who are frequently tardy or who skip class are punished.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	81% 75% 66%	6% 15% 24%	12% 10% 9%
27. I need extra help with my school work.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	50% 25% 30%	42% 55% 58%	8% 19% 12%
28. Punishments are given fairly at my school.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	84% 39% 39%	8% 36% 45%	7% 24% 15%
29. My school is doing a good job of preparing me for what I will be doing after I graduate.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	79% 59% 67%	13% 21% 24%	8% 19% 8%
30. I like to learn.	HOPE BIG BLUE G-1	86% 74% 83%	7% 17% 9%	6% 9% 8%

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